

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 006149

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR INR/R/MR; IIP/RW; IIP/RNY; BBG/VOA; IIP/WEU; AF/PA;
EUR/WE /P/SP; D/C (MCCOO); EUR/PA; INR/P; INR/EUC; PM; OSC ISA
FOR ILN; NEA; WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC/WEUROPE; DOC FOR ITA/EUR/FR
AND PASS USTR/PA; USINCEUR FOR PAO; NATO/PA; MOSCOW/PA;
ROME/PA; USVIENNA FOR USDEL OSCE.

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [FR](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Katrina - Political Fallout

Iraq Middle East - Gaza Pullout

PARIS - PARIS - Monday, September 12, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Katrina - Political Fallout

Iraq

Middle East - Gaza Pullout

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Ambassador Craig Stapleton is saluted in regional L'Est Republicain on the occasion of his visit to Verdun and his inauguration of the Meyerowitz photo exhibit "Ground Zero." "The U.S. Ambassador embodies courtesy and simplicity. If Europe's diplomacy were modeled after Craig Stapleton, the level of arrogance in the world would drop by about half."

Ambassador Craig Stapleton signs an op-ed in Le Monde titled "From 9/11 to Katrina" commemorating the 9/11 tragedy and France's friendship and solidarity, then and now, illustrated by Le Monde's editorial at the time: "We Are All Americans." The two tragedies are also juxtaposed in a number of reports on the aftermath of Katrina and the 9/11 commemoration ceremonies, noting President Bush's third visit to the Gulf of Mexico, "where he planned to spend the night." Commentary and headlines remain harsh. For popular right-of-center France Soir "President Bush's Friends Will Profit From Katrina." Sacha Vandebrouk writes about the new Halliburton scandal and mentions newly appointed Karen Hughes, whose "task of image rebuilding like that of President Bush's damage control, looks like mission impossible." But in Le Figaro editorialist Yves Threard is much less critical in a column titled "Simple-Minded Anti-Americanism." (See Part C) The report in Le Figaro from their correspondent nevertheless suggests that "President Bush's political priorities may have been upset by Katrina. He may have to re-orient his priorities to domestic issues and see his international aspirations somewhat weakened." Right-of-center financial La Tribune devotes a three-page special report to America's vulnerability.

In an interview in Le Figaro Emmanuel Todd analyzes the failings of the U.S. system as shown by the Katrina tragedy and concludes: "The great weakness of the U.S. economic system is that it relies on consumer buying and not on true internal industrial capabilities. This was apparent in Iraq, where the Americans were slow to protect their troops with proper equipment. contrary to what happened in the Second WW. At the time America's strength depended on industrial capitalism made up of engineers and technicians. rather than consumers."

Left-of-center Liberation devotes its editorial to the military pullout from Gaza (See part C) while Catholic La Croix carries an op-ed by Joseph Yacoub on Iraq's democratization. (See Part C)

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Katrina - Political Fallout

"Simple-Minded Anti-Americanism"

Yves Threard in right-of-center Le Figaro (09/12): "September 2001, September 2005. In between these two tragedies America found itself at the center of numerous controversies and the target of every type of accusation and criticism from Europe, and mostly from France. In 2001, the world's most powerful nation appeared vulnerable and decided to take its revenge, first in Afghanistan and later in Iraq. The world discovered a new Bush, arrogant and shortsighted. In 2005, word was out that the American model was faulty: poverty and racial hate were singled out. The opportunity was too good to pass to underscore President Bush's negligence and the effects of 'Yankee liberalism.' The accusations against the U.S. serve to hide our incoherence and our own faults. To gloat over the decline of the American empire is easy. Some see even the hand of God in Katrina, as if the U.S. had to pay for not signing the Kyoto protocol. Others, more credible, point that the U.S. lives on credit. While it is true that America is not in a position to give anyone lessons, it is also absurd to claim to

discover today that America is not perfect. With or without Bush. Katrina, no more than Bin Laden, has brought America to its knees. Derision and demonizing are definitely out of order."

"Bush in the Eye of the Cyclone"

Sacha Vanderbrouck in right-of-center France Soir (09/12): "The House of Bush is leaking. From the heights of greatness to decadence. After the popularity that followed the aftermath of 9/11, President Bush's popularity has dropped to its lowest. America does not look ready to forgive, in spite of the President having recalled Michael Brown to Washington. This loss of support is fueled by a series of controversies, from the intervention in Iraq to the misappropriated funds earmarked for repair work of the levees in New Orleans. Now President Bush must face the new scandal of contracts assigned for the rebuilding of America's South to friends of the Republicans, including Halliburton. The President's decision to overnight in Louisiana is a strong gesture counterbalancing his two previous visits. It shows that the President wants to once again be in control although he is being accused from all sides. This determination was also apparent on Friday with the nomination of Karen Hughes to lead America's Public Diplomacy and try to improve America's image in the world. What looks very much like mission impossible."

Iraq

"Iraq in Search of Democracy"

Joseph Yacoub in Catholic La Croix (09/12): "Imposing democracy is the opposite of democracy. How can Iraqi society become democratic with a model imposed from the outside, when democracy means by definition power of the people. Who has the authority to impose democracy in Iraq other than its people? One of the conditions for democracy is security. In Iraq, we are very far from having reached security. If the U.S. believes it can transform Iraq to their specifications, they are mistaken. Iraqi society needs a central government. Democracy requires certain preambles. The Americans, in their stubbornness, think they can proclaim democracy. They are wrong. And by proclaiming this they are ignoring Iraq's true problems. Considering Iraq's past history, Iraq cannot produce a miracle. Democracy is not a consumer product. It cannot be exported, it must invent itself."

Middle East - Gaza Pullout

"A Series of Traps"

Gerard Dupuy in left-of-center Liberation (09/12): "As Tsahal withdraws from Gaza, it leaves behind lost illusions and a time bomb. In the coming months the Palestinian Authority will need to work hard to defuse that bomb. Normalization of Gaza is all the more problematic because of its new ambiguous status: while no longer an occupied territory, it remains encircled and unable to use its airport or its sea port, undermining an economic development without which the powder keg will remain a powder keg. Leaving behind the synagogues is another trap." STAPLETON